



Directorate of
Intelligence

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Afghanistan Situation Report



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17 May 1983

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT


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SOVIETS LAUNCH "SCORCHED EARTH" ATTACKS NORTH OF KABUL



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Embassy and press reports last week stated that massive air and artillery attacks, designed to destroy insurgent strongholds in the Shomali area, had brought widespread damage to villages and a flood of refugees into Kabul. These reports also claim civilians were executed and the insurgents were unable to resist continuing attacks.

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no recent heavy combat activity has occurred in the area.

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Comment: Western news reports appear to have greatly exaggerated the extent of recent combat activity and destruction in the Shomali area. Soviet and Afghan forces have conducted many operations in this area in a continuing effort to stop insurgent ambushes along the main supply road to Kabul. Repeated large-scale air and ground attacks on the area would eventually drive out most of the civilians, denying local insurgent groups valuable sources of support and information, thus gradually reducing resistance activity.

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PESHAWAR: INSURGENT LEADERS' FEARS



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Peshawar insurgent leaders have mixed feelings about Pakistani intentions after a recent meeting with President Zia, in which he assured them of his continuing support. On the one hand, they acknowledge that Zia's request that they move outside of Peshawar is valid because of growing law-and-order problems. On the other hand, the leaders are worried about Zia's mention of unspecified "progress" at the Geneva negotiations. Moreover, they are concerned about current rumors about the establishment of a "buffer zone" agreement whereby Soviet and Pakistani forces would pull back from the Afghan-Pakistani border.

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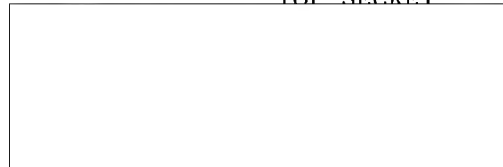
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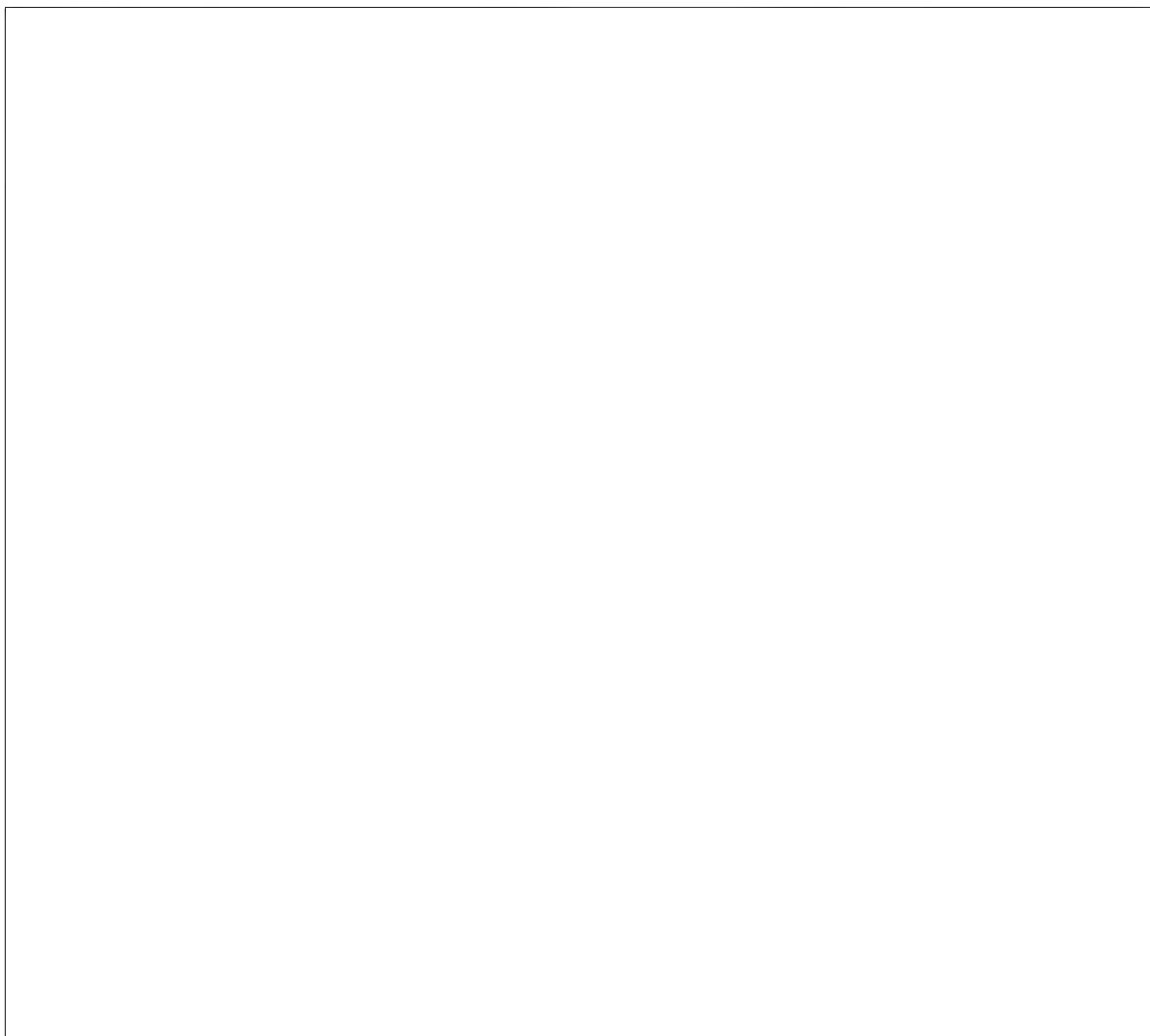
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"progress" is unlikely at Geneva. The insurgents' suspicions reflect their great dependence on Pakistani support and their continued fears of a sell-out.



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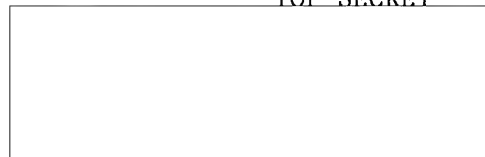


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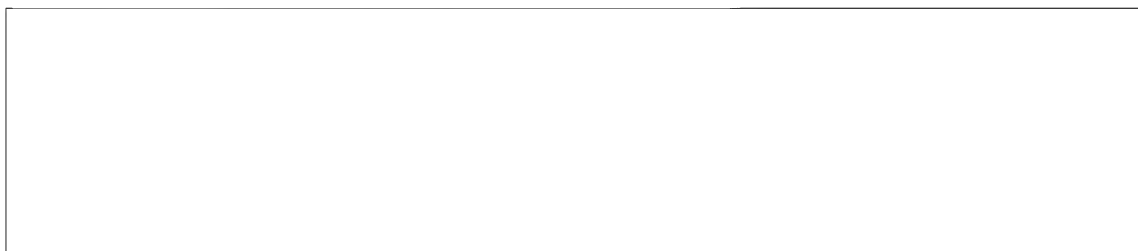


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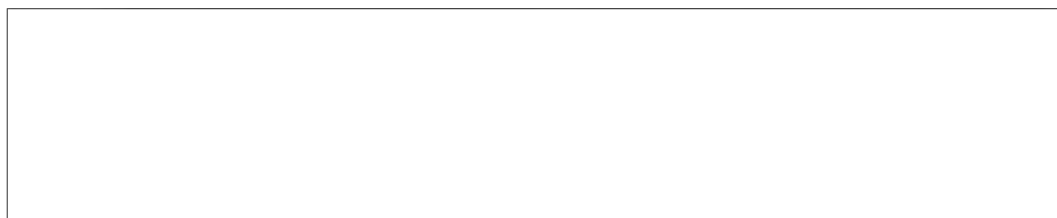
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[redacted] insurgent weapons supplies have increased greatly compared to last year. Substantial quantities of Chinese-made automatic weapons and mortars are reaching resistance groups, and most insurgents now carry AK-47s instead of .303 rifles. Although many civilians have left villages because of bombing, insurgents' morale remains high, and they appear determined to continue the war indefinitely.

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-- Afghan Embassy officials in New Delhi have told former Indian employees of the US Embassy that--as part of a campaign against the US Embassy--the Kabul authorities may refuse to allow American US Embassy personnel to return to Kabul from the US.



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PERSPECTIVE

AFGHANISTAN IN APRIL

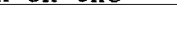


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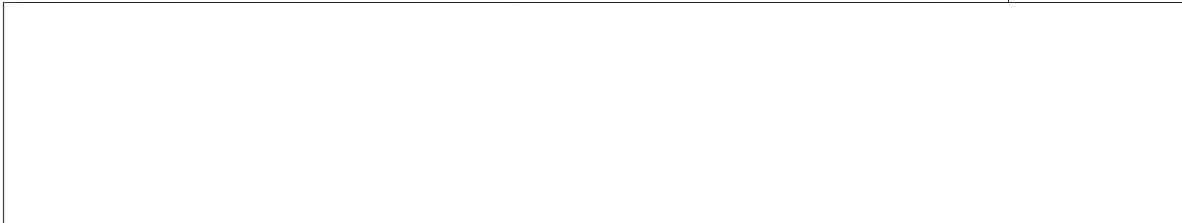


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The Soviet spring offensive in April made some progress both on the battlefield and in negotiations with local insurgent leaders.



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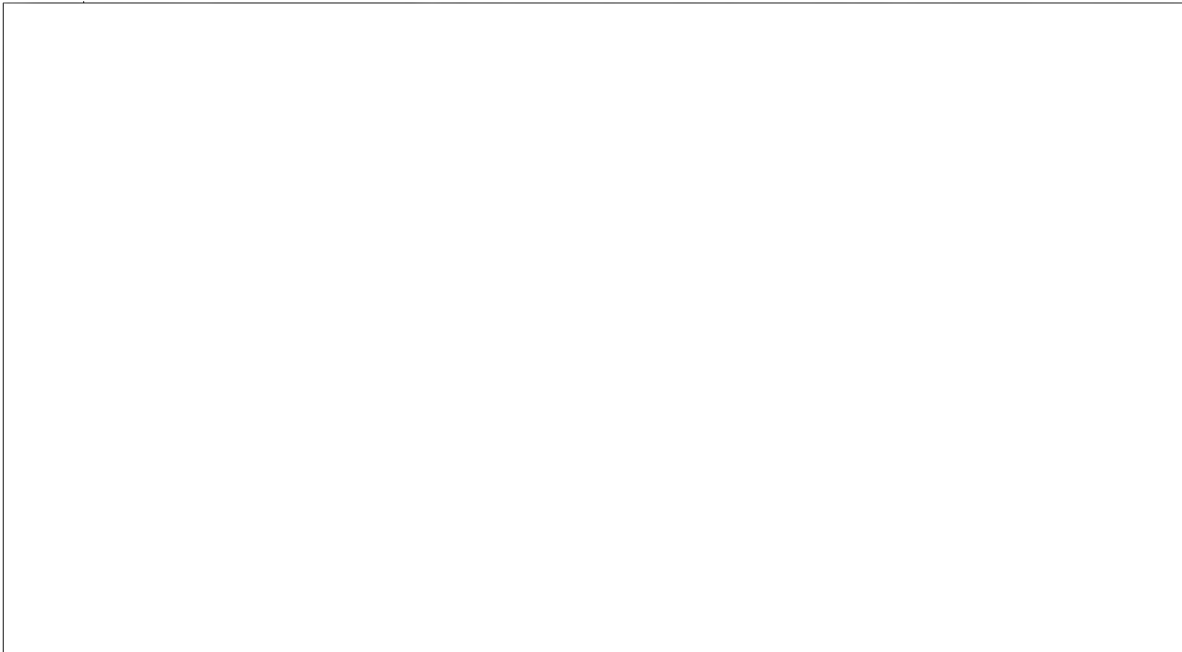
Major Soviet/Afghan military operations, meanwhile, were particularly intense in areas near Kabul, although the insurgents fought back effectively. The insurgents also maintained strong resistance in and near the cities of Qandahar and Herat, and in Paktia and Lowgar Provinces.



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Earlier in the month, a large-scale Soviet and Afghan operation in the Nejrab-Tagab area north of Kabul ran into trouble. [REDACTED]

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The strong insurgent response to this operation indicates that, despite recent truce talks with guerrillas in the Panjsher Valley, other large insurgent groups will continue to pose a considerable military threat in the area. [REDACTED] Soviet efforts to avoid combat with insurgents from the Panjsher Valley--which could jeopardize negotiations--probably contributed to the apparent lack of success in the attack. [REDACTED]

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Near Paghman, 15 kilometers northwest of the capital, the regime carried out air and heavy artillery attacks. A strong and growing number of insurgents, well supplied with new weapons, had returned to the area after spending the winter in Pakistan, according to Embassy reports. Although the Soviet/Afghan presence has increased in Paghman, the insurgents are strong in the surrounding area. [REDACTED]

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In Kabul, explosions and assassinations continued throughout April, though the insurgents were unable to mount a significant action in the city during the 27 April anniversary celebrations. Most of the city remained low on electrical power because of insurgent attacks on powerlines. [REDACTED]

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Paktia, Lowgar Provinces. Resistance attacks on regime convoys in Paktia continued through April, and the Embassy reports that a large number of regime wounded were transported from Paktia to Kabul late in the month. In the Lowgar Valley, the Mujahadeen remained strong in spite of repeated bombing and rocket attacks by Soviet/Afghan forces, and convoys to and from Gardez continued to come under attack. [REDACTED]

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Qandahar, Herat Provinces. Fighting in Qandahar Province was intense during April, according to Embassy reports. The insurgents, with growing civilian support following a regime conscription drive,





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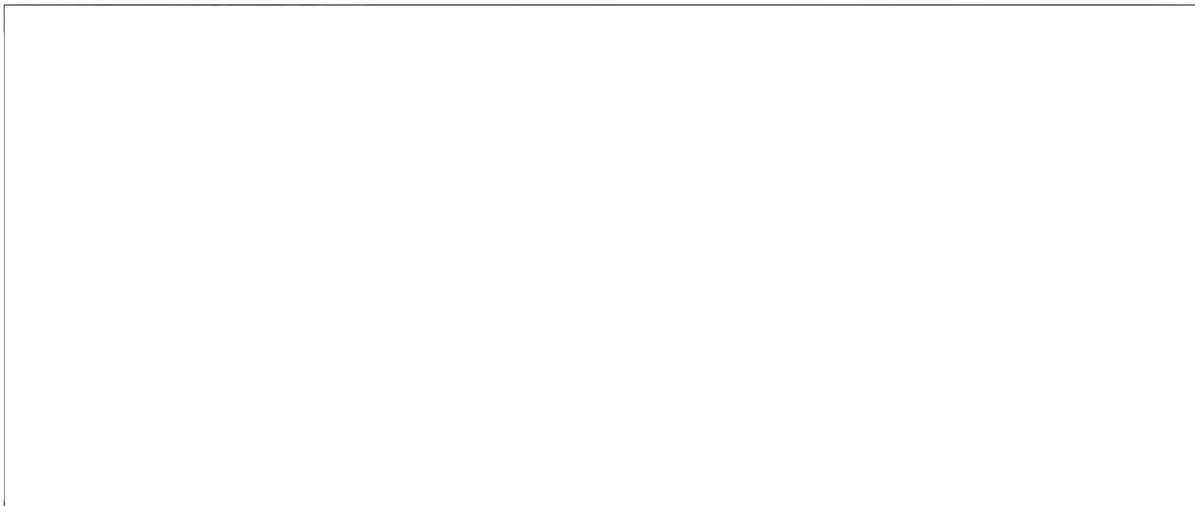
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conducted numerous attacks on civil and military targets throughout Qandahar City. Main roads throughout the city and the highway to Herat remained unsafe for all regime and Soviet traffic, and convoys that detoured to the north and west of Qandahar were regularly harassed. 

Regime air attacks in mid-April in Herat Province killed several hundred civilians as well as insurgents 
 The resistance managed to destroy about 50 armored vehicles and to shoot down at least one Soviet aircraft 
Soviet/Afghan bombing of the area near Herat City expanded in mid-April, according to the Embassy, causing extensive civilian casualties and a continuing flight of the population. 

Political Developments



27 April Anniversary. The fifth anniversary of the Communist takeover was commemorated by speeches and parades, according to Embassy and press reports. The level of Soviet and other foreign delegations was upgraded over previous years, and non-Communist journalists were invited to attend for the first time. The failure of the insurgents to launch a major operation to upstage the celebrations demonstrates the difficulty in overcoming extraordinary government security precautions. The regime accompanied its anniversary propaganda efforts with the announcement of a major amnesty for some of the estimated 100,000 political prisoners. However, Embassy sources observed no large-scale releases. 



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Harassment of the US Embassy continued during the month, with further arrests of foreign national employees, probably in connection with plans to stage additional propaganda shows and to limit Embassy information sources.

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Regime Promotions. A number of politically significant promotions preceded the anniversary preparations, with Defense Minister Qader elevated to the rank of colonel general, according to Embassy and press reports. The promotion was Qader's second in less than a year, making him the undisputed leader of the armed forces. KHAD Director General Najibullah was awarded the military rank of lieutenant general, and Khalqi Interior Minister Gulabzoi was given the rank of brigadier general, perhaps to indicate that his personal position in the regime is secure despite a series of recent setbacks for Khalqis in the armed forces.

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Economic Developments

The closing of the Kabul-Jalalabad Road in late April, probably because of flooding, has illustrated how dependent Kabul is on its road link to agriculturally rich Nangarhar Province, the Embassy reports. The blockage of the highway has dramatically reduced the availability of fruits and vegetables in the Kabul market. Moreover, Embassy reports show sharp price increases for certain commodities, confirming open source reports that inflation continued to rise throughout April. Black market activities continue to flourish, with the exchange rate of the afghani reaching 90 to 1, while the official rate stands at 50 to 1.

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